About LEVEL news

Contents

Dry Weather Slows Increase in Lake Levels
Repairs Resume on St. Marys River Control Structure
Ice Boom Removed
Public Meetings
April Precipitation
April Outflows
Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour ... *a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service*
About the monthly Water Level bulletin
April Precipitation Over the Great Lakes
As a percentage of the long-term April average:
Great Lakes Basin 61%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair) 55%
Lake Superior 59%
Lakes Michigan-Huron 66%
Lake Ontario 60%
Note: These figures are preliminary.
April Outflows From the Great Lakes

LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

Volume 5, Number 5 **May 7, 1997**

Dry Weather Slows Increase in Lake Levels

Precipitation was below average throughout the Great Lakes basin during April, for the first month since last November. These dry conditions provided some welcome relief, as they slowed the seasonal increase in levels on Lakes Ontario, Erie and St. Clair, and they offset the high inflows from snowmelt into Lakes Superior and Huron.

Despite this improvement, the risk of damage to shore property remains high, particularly along Lakes Huron, St. Clair and Erie. At the beginning of May, these three lakes were 52 to 56 centimetres above average levels, while Lakes Superior and Ontario were about 27 centimetres above average.

Virtually all the snow has melted on the United States' side of the Great Lakes basin, but there is still a relatively large amount of snow north of Lakes Superior and Huron. Melting of this snow through the first part of May will continue to add to the water levels of these lakes.

While the dry weather has led to some improvement in lake levels, a return to wet weather would quickly push the levels of Lakes Superior, Huron, St. Clair and Erie to within a few centimetres of previous record highs.

Repairs Resume on St. Marys River Control Structure

Repair work will resume in early May on the 16-gate control structure located on the St. Marys River at Sault Ste. Marie. As a result, the flows out of Lake Superior through the St. Marys Rapids will be altered somewhat, but the impacts on Great Lakes water levels are expected to be minimal.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will carry out repairs to two of the gates from early May until late September. This will require de-watering of the areas immediately upstream and downstream of the gates. Several adjacent gates will also be closed to permit work boats to safely navigate along the upstream side of the structure. As a result, about eight of the 16 gates will be available for use in the regulation of Lake Superior outflows.

The flow limitation at the structure is expected to have a minor impact on lake levels, as a large portion of the St. Marys River flow will continue to bypass the structure at three nearby hydropower plants. If the upper lakes

As a percentage of the long-term April average:

Lake Superior	128%
Lake Erie	132%
Lake Huron	113%
Lake Ontario	122%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

Last Issue

Next Issue

Issue Index

Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

basin turns very wet this summer, the maximum impact on Lake Superior due to the repairs would be a one centimetre rise in lake level.

To help offset the anticipated flow reductions at the control structure, the International Lake Superior Board of Control has directed more gates be opened during the last ten days of April and early May. This could temporarily raise Lake Huron's level by one to two centimetres. Upon completion of the repairs in September, it is expected that flows will be adjusted to quickly offset the impacts on levels of any over- or under-discharges that occurred as a result of the repair program.

The control structure was built between 1902 and 1919. Repairs and maintenance are the responsibilities of its owners, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (which owns the southern half), and Great Lakes Power Limited in Canada. The U.S. program of repairing two gates per year started in 1995, and will be completed in 1998. Great Lakes Power completed repairs to all its gates except Gate 1 in 1996.

Ice Boom Removed

Removal of the Lake Erie - Niagara River ice boom began on April 25 and was completed on April 28. The boom is installed each winter to enhance formation of a stable ice cover, which has reduced formation of ice jams in the river.

Some ice does pass over the boom, especially during periods of strong southwesterly winds. There were several such incidents during the past winter, and a significant amount of ice collected in the Maid of the Mist pool, located immediately below the Falls. In early April, a substantial buildup of ice raised the water level of the pool, which resulted in flooding of the Ontario Power hydroelectric plant and the Maid-of-the-Mist Steamboat Company property.

Since this ice buildup occurred below Niagara Falls, it did not affect flows in the upper Niagara River, and there was no impact on Lake Erie's water level.

Public Meetings

The annual public meeting of the International Lake Superior Board of Control will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 17th, at the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority office, 130 Conservation Road, in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control will hold its public meeting in Brockville, Ontario, at the Royal Brock Hotel on Wednesday, July 2nd at 7:30 p.m.

Top of Page
Français | Contact Us | Help | Search | Canada Site
What's New | Topics | Publications | Weather | Home | About Us

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